



# Department Updates

April / May 2022

## Treasurer

The following is a new program to help homeowners with taxes and help them keep their homes. If you know of anyone struggling to pay their bills please pass this information on to them.

### **WISCONSIN HELP FOR HOMEOWNERS** **Exciting news for Wisconsin Homeowners!!!**

The Wisconsin Help for Homeowners program has officially launched!!!

Wisconsin Help for Homeowners (WHH) is a new statewide program that can help with overdue bills like mortgage payments, property taxes, and utilities.

The program is open to homeowners in Wisconsin with overdue housing-related bills, both with and without a mortgage, who meet income and other eligibility requirements, and have experienced a qualified economic hardship since January 21, 2020.

The \$92 million federally funded program will provide a maximum of \$40,000 in assistance for eligible households.

- Application portal: [HomeownerHelp.WI.Gov](https://HomeownerHelp.WI.Gov).
- Dedicated call center: 1-855-2-HOME-WI (*will help provide additional information about how to apply, but applications can't be submitted by phone*)
- **WHH Frequently Asked Questions**

- If your family is struggling to pay your home bills, Wisconsin Help for Homeowners can help! Funding is now available to prevent foreclosure and help Wisconsinites get ahead. WIHelp4Homeowners - Start your application today at [homeownerhelp.wi.gov](https://homeownerhelp.wi.gov)
- Are you a Wisconsin homeowner at risk of foreclosure? Missed a few property tax payments and are trying to catch up? The Wisconsin Help for Homeowners program could help! WIHelp4Homeowners - Learn more and apply at [homeownerhelp.wi.gov](https://homeownerhelp.wi.gov)
- If you're
  - A Wisconsin Homeowner
  - Behind on your mortgage, property taxes, or utility bills
  - Looking for help catching up

The new WIHelp4Homeowners program may be able to help!

Visit [homeownerhelp.wi.gov](https://homeownerhelp.wi.gov) for more info.

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## Waste to Energy & Recycling

### Brent Bohn, Plant Director

#### Recycling:

In 2021 Barron County residents recycled 810 tons of recyclables along with 75.5 tons of electronic waste, 50.6 tons of appliances and 76.4 tons of yard waste (compost). Great Job Barron County!!!

Recycling frequently asked questions:

Q: Are items that are separated for recycling truly recycled or are they burned?

A: Yes they are recycled. In fact, per federal law, once an item is removed from the waste stream for recycling it cannot return to the waste stream for landfilling or energy recovery.

If it ever goes into the recycling stream, whether placed there by an individual or business / industry, it must end up being recycled.

It does not matter which hauler you have or community, county or state you live in; the recycling laws are nationwide and waste haulers must offer recycling options. Unless there are other options available, like in Barron County's case, we have recycling drop boxes and staffed sites as an option.

Q: What is the difference between recycling and waste to energy?

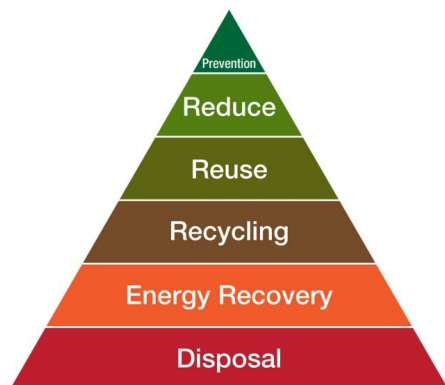
A: Recycling is the process of collecting and processing materials and turning them into new products. Waste to energy is the process of incinerating the waste and collecting the energy produced by the incineration process.

Q: What is the “Waste Hierarchy”?

A: Waste Hierarchy is a tool used in the evaluation of processes that protect the environment alongside resource and energy consumption from most favorable to least favorable actions. The hierarchy establishes preferred program priorities based on sustainability.

The waste management hierarchy indicates an order of preference for action to reduce and manage waste, and is usually presented diagrammatically in the form of a pyramid. The hierarchy captures the progression of a material or product through successive stages of waste management, and represents the latter part of the life-cycle for each product.

The aim of the waste hierarchy is to extract the maximum practical benefits from products and to generate the minimum amount of waste. The proper application of the waste hierarchy can have several benefits. It can help prevent emissions of greenhouse gases, reduces pollutants, save energy, conserves resources, create jobs and stimulate the development of green technologies.



As you can see, Barron County is fortunate to have both recycling and energy recovery options. Most counties in Wisconsin do not have the energy recovery option.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions about recycling or waste handling and disposal!

## Aging & Disability Resource Center

### Jen Jako, Director

The ADRC is a one-stop shop for information and resources for older adults, adults with disabilities, caregivers, and other community providers. We provide information about Wisconsin's long term care programs, help with local resources, and provide information on living options, in home help options, and how to pay for it. ADRC's raise visibility about the full range of available options and provide information that is unbiased and reliable.

**Brain Health:** Customers are asking for more information about brain health. The number one risk factor for dementia is age. As Barron County's older population continues to grow, so does our customer base; with a significant increase in concerns or general interest in brain health. To respond to this growing need, the ADRC is offering many new opportunities:

- **Fortune Cookies** is a free one act community play that helps family members, caregivers, and the broader community talk about brain health, dementia and the most well-known form of memory loss, Alzheimer's disease. All community members are welcome to attend any of these three local events (free meal included!); registration is required and seating is limited. You have multiple options to enjoy this free play in the area. [Register Here](#)  
**June 7th, 5:00-7:30 p.m.** - Shell Lake Arts Center, 802 1st St., Shell Lake  
**June 8th, 11:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m.** - Tee-Away Gold & Supper Club, 1401 E 11th St., Ladysmith  
**June 8th, 5:00-7:30 p.m.** - The Mill, 646 Banks St., Chetek
- **Wits Workout for Brain Health** is a fun monthly get together to develop social connections and to give your brain a workout by learning new things and participating in interactive puzzles and games.
- **Boost Your Brain & Memory Workshop** is a unique program that takes a holistic approach to improving brain health in older adults. Participants will learn new habits to maintain brain health while practicing new skills for better memory performance.
- **Beneficial Bites for Brain Health** is a monthly nutrition education opportunity at seven different locations and times throughout Barron County. The sessions are free and include taste-testing different recipes with the idea to slowly incorporate brain health foods into your diet regimen.

For more information about any of these opportunities, contact Trisha Witham at 715-537-6226 or [trisha.witham@co.barron.wi.us](mailto:trisha.witham@co.barron.wi.us)

**Older adults needed for ADRC Focus Group:** We are seeking older adults (60+) who live in Barron County interested in participating in a focus group to learn more about their health concerns. During our Aging Plan development, older adults identified brain health, arthritis, and exercise as top health concerns and the ADRC would like to learn more about these concerns to best serve our community. If you are interested in participating, please contact Alisa Lammers at 715-537-6374 or [alisa.lammers@co.barron.wi.us](mailto:alisa.lammers@co.barron.wi.us)

**Public Health Emergency "Unwinding":** The pandemic resulted in changes in Medicaid and FoodShare benefits and the renewal processes for many of our customers over the past few years. Our current understanding is that the State of Wisconsin's Public Health Emergency will end in October 2022 and pre-pandemic eligibility and renewal requirements will resume. The ADRC recognizes this will result in potential changes in or loss of benefits for some of our customers. The ADRC will help spread the word and be here to assist customers with questions, renewals, and options counseling if they are losing benefits as they move through the unwinding process over the next year. The ADRC anticipates many phone calls and needed assistance to help people understand how to navigate through the changes.

**Nutrition Program Kitchen update:** We were not awarded the ARPA Neighborhood Investment Fund Grant. (Barron County submitted an \$8.5 million dollar grant project to build an innovative Barron County Community Health building in the City of Rice Lake at the Ann St location.) It remains critical for our Nutrition Program operation to have a kitchen space to meet growing demand as our county ages; we are still exploring the Ann St location and possible utilization of county ARPA funding. I am currently working with Maintenance Director Olson and consultants to create preliminary designs to be considered.

**May is Older Americans Act month!** Older adults play vital, positive roles in our community – as family members, friends, mentors, volunteers, civic leaders, members of our workforce, and so much more. The theme for Older Americans Month is "Age My Way," and the ADRC is here to empower individuals and caregivers to remain independent. If you or anyone you know needs any information about our services or needs help planning for the future, please call at 888-538-3031 or 715-537-6225, email staff, or check out our website at [www.adrcconnections.org](http://www.adrcconnections.org), or like us on Facebook [@ADRCBarron](https://www.facebook.com/ADRCBarron).

## Health & Human Services

### Stacey Frolik, Director

May is National Foster Care Month! Each May, we take time to acknowledge and thank our foster parents for all of their hard work throughout the year. Our foster families provide for the safety, permanency, and well-being of children through their formative years. Their leadership, support for necessary services, and productive partnerships with counties, states, tribes, and communities is of the utmost importance. The intent of foster care is to provide a safe environment for children and youth who temporarily cannot live with their families. Most often, the children in need of foster homes are adolescents, sibling groups, are of minority status, or have special needs and many children in foster care have experienced some type of trauma. However, children are amazingly resilient. Foster parents make a difference in the life of a child everyday by providing a structured, stable, predictable and nurturing environment. We have about 44 foster homes in Barron County. 7 homes are child specific meaning they are licensed only for specific children, typically a relative or they had a pre-established relationship such as a teacher, neighbor, friend of the family etc. 37 are general homes meaning they are open to taking in any foster children. Child specific homes can be licensed as a Level 1 or Level 2 with the primary difference being in the amount they are reimbursed each month. Please join us in offering our infinite gratitude to all our Barron County Foster Families! Our Barron County Foster Care Coordinators are Kate Montague and LeeAnn Davidson.

The Barron County Drug and Alcohol Court will be teaming up with the Barron County Family Drug Treatment Court to participate in a highway clean up. The cleanup day is slated for a day in June. This is an opportunity for participants, alumni and providers to work side by side to help clean up the roadside in Barron County. The section of road adopted by this group is on Highway V near Haugen.

Tourist rooming house season is upon us. In general, tourist rooming house establishments are vacation homes, cabins, and cottages that are rented out to tourists and transients for a short period of time. Under a tourist rooming house license, an operator may rent as many as four units (e.g., rooms, cottages, cabins). You will need a hotel license if you rent five or more units.

Barron County Environmental Health is an agent of the State of Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to license tourist rooming houses in the county.

- Licenses issued by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) expire June 30 of each year.
- License dates extend from July 1 of one year through June 30 of the following year.
- If a license is granted after April 1 of a license year, that license will extend to June 30 of the following year. For example, if a business is licensed by DATCP on April 1, 2021, then its license will expire June 30, 2022.
- Renewal fees for existing establishments shall be submitted to DATCP before June 30 each year.

Barron County currently has 112 tourist rooming houses licensed in Barron County, there are 10 licenses in process. There is a pre-inspection fee and an annual fee which needs to be paid prior to licensing. The pre-inspection fee will either be \$390 if it is a new establishment or \$292.50 if it has been licensed as a tourist rooming house in the past. The annual permit fee is \$266.50. Our two Sanitarians who complete the licensing are MacKenzie Benda and Rachel Henke.

Barron County DHHS and the Sheriff's Department are partnering on a new initiative made possible through supplemental Mental Health and Substance Use block grant funding. This program is a co-responder model in which a mental health/substance use disorder specialist partners with law enforcement on calls that it appears mental health or substance use may be a contributing factor in the call for assistance. The goals of the program are early intervention in mental health and substance use crisis situations to decrease the severity/escalation/duration of the crisis, decrease arrests and utilization of jail in situations where alternate response is more appropriate, avoid unnecessary psychiatric hospitalizations, early identification of necessary emergency detentions, return law enforcement to other duties more timely, and enhanced patient/consumer care by assisting in navigation of crisis system supporting stabilization. This position will be housed at the Justice Center and supervised by the DHHS Mental Health Manager. Aaron (AJ) Kammeyer has been hired as a limited term employee for this position.